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FURTHER PROMOTION AND ENCOURAGEMENT OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS, INCLUDING THE QUESTION OF THE PROGRAMME AND METHODS OF WORK OF THE COMMISSION

Written statement submitted by the Inter-Parliamentary Union, a non-governmental organization in general consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement, which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1296 (XLIV).

[10 March 1998]

Preparations for the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

On the occasion of the 98th Inter-Parliamentary Conference held in September 1997 in Cairo, the Inter-Parliamentary Union - the world organization of national parliaments - adopted the following resolution with a view to the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights:

Resolution adopted without a vote* by the Inter-Parliamentary Council, the plenary governing body of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (Cairo, 16 September 1997) 1/

The Inter-Parliamentary Council,

Recalling the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 10 December 1948,

Stressing that the Declaration sets forth "a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations, to the end that every individual and every organ of society shall strive by teaching and education to promote respect for these rights and freedoms and by progressive measures, national and international, to secure their universal and effective recognition and observance",

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* After the resolution was adopted the delegations of Indonesia and Singapore expressed reservations to the text.

1/ The following national Parliaments were represented at this Conference: Albania, Algeria, Andorra, Angola, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Belarus, Belgium, Benin, Bolivia, Botswana, Brazil, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Cameroon, Canada, Cape Verde, Chile, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Denmark, Djibouti, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Estonia, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, France, Gabon, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Guatemala, Guinea, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Kazakstan, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lebanon, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malawi, Malaysia, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Monaco, Mongolia, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Niger, Norway, Pakistan, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Rwanda, San Marino, Senegal, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Sweden, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Thailand, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Togo, Tunisia, Turkey, Uganda, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Venezuela, Viet Nam, Yemen, Yugoslavia, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

Welcoming the fact that over the years the Declaration has provided both inspiration and substance for the development of a corpus of human rights principles and standards, as enshrined particularly in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and in regional human rights instruments and national legislation,

Recalling that the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, adopted by consensus in 1993 by the World Conference on Human Rights, reaffirmed the international community's commitment to these human rights principles and standards and their universal and indivisible character,

Noting with deep concern that the goals set half a century ago are nonetheless still distant since human rights standards are not fully and universally respected and human rights and fundamental freedoms continue to be violated in all parts of the world,

Aware of the particular duty of Parliaments and their members, as guardians of human rights, to defend and promote human rights and so contribute to the building of a world in which human beings enjoy the entire spectrum of civil, cultural, economic, social and political rights,

Recalling the many resolutions adopted in recent years by the Inter-Parliamentary Union on issues of human rights, recommending specific action by governments and parliaments to uphold and promote human rights in various areas, including in particular:

- "Strengthening national structures, institutions and organizations of society which play a role in promoting and safeguarding human rights" (Copenhagen, 17 September 1994);

- "The protection of minorities as a global issue and a prerequisite for stability, security and peace" (Istanbul, 19 April 1996);

- "Promoting greater respect and protection of human rights in general and in particular for women and children" (Beijing, 20 September 1996),

Considering that the United Nations, in General Assembly resolution 51/88, invited States "to review and assess the progress that has been made in the field of human rights since the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, to identify obstacles and ways in which they can be overcome to achieve progress in this area, to undertake additional efforts and to develop programmes of education and information, with a view to disseminating the text of the Declaration and arriving at a better understanding of the universal message",

1. Firmly believes that all States have a duty to seek, in cooperation with the United Nations, the promotion of universal respect for and observance of all human rights and fundamental freedoms and reaffirms that human rights are a matter of legitimate international concern since respect for them constitutes a pillar of international order;

2. Reaffirms the importance of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and recommends that the parliamentary community mark its fiftieth anniversary in 1998 with a series of activities in support of the defence and promotion of human rights;

3. Calls on all Parliaments and their members to take action at the national level to ensure:

(i) That international and regional human rights treaties are ratified or acceded to promptly by their countries, in case they have not already done so, and that reservations are withdrawn whenever they conflict with the object and purpose of the treaty;

(ii) That enabling legislation is enacted and that the provisions of national laws and regulations are harmonized with the norms and standards contained in these instruments with a view to their full implementation;

(iii) That full cooperation and adequate information is offered to international and regional human rights bodies, including international criminal courts, and that individual complaints procedures provided for in international human rights treaties are accepted;

(iv) That independent national institutions for human rights, including the office of an Ombudsman or equivalent institution, together with parliamentary bodies overseeing human rights issues, are established or activated to operate in keeping with human rights norms;

(v) That non-governmental organizations working for the promotion and protection of human rights receive the necessary support and protection;

(vi) That the necessary budgetary provisions are made for action to promote and protect human rights, with special reference to human rights education;

4. Invites all Parliaments to hold a special sitting on or close to 10 December 1998, with the support from national parliamentary human rights bodies, to celebrate the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and to discuss the protection and promotion of human rights;

5. Invites also all Parliaments to encourage greater participation by the youth in national events to celebrate the Universal Declaration of Human Rights;

6. Calls upon Parliaments and their members to extend support and cooperation at the international level to the work of the United Nations and, in particular, the United Nations High Commissioner on Human Rights, as well as to regional human rights bodies;

7. Recommends that the question of respect for human rights be addressed on the occasion of the 100th Inter-Parliamentary Conference in Moscow and, to that end, urges the members of the IPU to present reports on action they have taken to follow up this resolution, well in advance of that Conference;

8. Decides in favour of the IPU being represented, in a manner to be decided upon in due time, at the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which will take place during the United Nations General Assembly on 10 December 1998, and for an IPU contribution to be prepared for the celebrations in the form of information on parliamentary mechanisms to promote and protect human rights worldwide;

9. Requests the Secretary General to pursue discussions on activities to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights with the United Nations and inter-parliamentary assemblies and organizations and to report to the Council at its 162nd session on further measures the Union may take.